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ABSTRACT

A strategy for promoting a culturally inclusive college communication curriculum was developed based on collaboration between two faculty members from the School of Communication at Howard University in Washington, D.C. (HU) and Ohio Dominican College (ODC). In particular the African American HU professor served as a mentor to the ODC professor so as to engage in curriculum development that would promote more inclusion of African-American perspectives in the ODC communication curriculum. The program lasted 3 years and focused on strategies to elicit change from the faculty rather than from the administration through the review of current courses to determine where important Black contributions may be added and to rework course syllabi to reflect the contributions of African-Americans to the discipline. The mentor and mentee worked to revise five of the mentee's courses. Interaction between the participants occurred via mail, the telephone and fax machines. In addition the two participants visited each other's campuses for research, attendance at classes, and general observation. The participants found the collaboration to yield tangible results in curricular development and less tangible but positive results in the experience of consistent interaction with a colleague from another institution. Attached is a student exit evaluation survey developed in the course of the collaboration. (Contains 22 references.) (JB)

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PROMOTING A MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM

USING INTER-UNIVERSITY FACULTY COLLABORATION AS A MODEL

ED358754

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PROMOTING A MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM USING INTER-UNIVERSITY FACULTY COLLABORATION AS A MODEL

Calls for a more inclusive curriculum, representative of the multicultural composition of American society, have come from a variety of sources (Taylor 1991; Viadero, 1992; Dates, 1991; Gordon & Bhattacharyya, 1992). It is speculated by the year 2000 33% of school age children in the U.S. will be from culturally and linguistically diverse populations that traditionally have been unrepresented or under represented in media industries and in media studies in higher education. One frequently hears that we need emphasis on education as a means to help American society get along with itself (in the area of inter-racial/ethnic relations). Common sense supports an inclusive curriculum, representative of the subcultural groups that comprise America, that will appeal to the diverse audience educated in America today and tomorrow.

In this article, the authors will describe a strategy for promoting a more inclusive communication curriculum. This strategy is based on the collaboration between two faculty members from two institutions. Jannette Dates (an African-American female) is an Associate Professor of Communication and Acting Dean of the School of Communication at Howard University (a historically Black institution). Jim Schnell (a European-American male) is an Associate Professor of Communication at Ohio Dominican College. They were brought together through a grant received by Ohio Dominican

College from the Lilly Foundation. The objective of the grant is for Ohio Dominican College to engage in curriculum development that will promote more inclusion of African-American perspectives. One of the means for meeting this objective is through mentor-mentee relationships that team non-African-American faculty (mentees) with eminent African-American faculty (mentors). This article describes one such mentor-mentee relationship between Dates (mentor) and Schnell (mentee).

A review of literature on the subject of curriculum development and multicultural inclusiveness reveals little that deals with models for curricular development specifically in communication programs. In a Feedback article, Dates argues that mass media courses can augment their historical examples by using supplementary textbooks and materials (1991). However, much has been written on curriculum development and multicultural inclusiveness that can be applied in communication arts and other disciplines within the social sciences. Helle Bering-Jensen (1990) recommends inclusion of minority contributions in classroom content as a means of supplementing Eurocentric perspectives. Beverly Tatum (1992) offers strategies for overcoming student resistance to race related content. Emphasis on inclusion of culturally diverse works of literature is described in Pfordresher (1992) and Post (1992). Michael Harris (1992) suggests one means of addressing racial problems is to promote inclusion of African

and African-American content in U.S. public schools. Kerry Feldman (1992) emphasizes how anthropology departments can be helpful in choosing multicultural education components. Jerry Gaff (1992) claims that multiculturalism has won the war against Eurocentrism and that we should move to the next step of creating inclusive programs that are educationally valuable. The authors acknowledge the latter claim and offer the following as a model to enhance quality curriculum development regarding Black contributions.

During the past quarter century many colleges and universities have tried to include minorities in their curriculums through the creation of African-American studies departments that stress Black contributions. It is a central premise of the Lilly Foundation grant proposal that "If majority students are to gain the benefits of the minority perspectives, we believe that the contributions of minorities should claim their proper place throughout the curriculum and not be relegated to a `separate but distinct' area (Ohio Dominican College, 1991, p. 13). The grant proposal speculates on why minority contributions are not included in the American curriculum foundation. "The primary reason, however, appears to be that our present faculty were not exposed to minority contributions in their graduate school training. If a graduate student is not exposed to minority contributions in his/her field in graduate school, the result is that he/she will continue the cycle. Consequently, many of the contributions of minorities have been `lost' or

relegated to non-mainstream areas of study" (Ohio Dominican College, 1991, pp. 13-14).

The aforementioned mentor-mentee relationship was established to begin the long process of change in the communication arts curriculum at Ohio Dominican College. Instant meaningful curricular change is not easily achieved. Meaningful curriculum change should arise from the faculty rather than from the administration in higher education. Primary goals of this relationship are to: 1) review current courses to determine where important Black contributions may be added and 2) rework course syllabi to reflect the contributions of African-Americans to the discipline. "This approach to curriculum change . . . makes the faculty member a key player in the review and revision of the curriculum. As the curriculum evolves, the faculty will have ownership of that curriculum" (Ohio Dominican College, 1991, p. 15).

The grant is designed to cover a three year period between 1992-1995.

> During the grant period, the Black mentors will be on campus at least once a semester and be available to the faculty mentee and to other faculty/administrators and students. In addition to the contributions this program will make to the curriculum, the presence on campus of these Black scholars will greatly enhance the intellectual life and integrity of the campus climate. The Ohio Dominican College mentees will visit their mentors campus to experience a

different learning environment and to confer extensively with their mentors. (Ohio Dominican College, 1991, p. 15).

Thus, curricular change occurs gradually during this three year period.

The communication arts discipline covers a wide range of subject areas including public speaking, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, mass media, rhetoric, journalism, public relations, broadcasting, theater, and cross-cultural studies. The model described in this article matches Jannette Dates, whose specialization is mass media, with Jim Schnell, whose specialty is cross-cultural communication. Although they specialize in different areas within communication arts there is enough common ground between them, in communication arts, for him to learn from her perspective (i.e. he teaches a course on Mass Media in America although it is not his primary area).

The authors have focused on five courses Schnell teaches: Rhetorical Communication Theory, Mass Media in America, Persuasion, Communication in the Organization, and a Unity in Diversity course. Examples of course modifications will be described to exemplify how curricular change in communication arts can be implemented.

Rhetorical Communication Theory is an upper-level course at Ohio Dominican College. The course traces the development of rhetoric from the classical period, to the British period, to the contemporary period. Two primary assignments in the

course are a research paper on significant rhetoricians and an oral presentation in class about the rhetorician researched. The suggested list of rhetoricians includes names such as Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, Marie Nichols, Stephen Toulmin, Cicero, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. No African-Americans are included in the list. As a result, the following African-American names have been added to the list as possible scholar/rhetoricians (of the African-American experience) to be studied: W.E.B. DuBois, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Ellison, Cornel West, and Toni Morrison. Thus, the list is more inclusive of Afrocentric perspectives.

The Mass Media in America course uses a textbook entitled Introduction to Mass Media (Black & Bryant, 1992). This text does a superior job of explaining basic elements of mass media theory but is not perceived to be as inclusive of racially and culturally diverse populations as it could be. Thus, Introduction to Mass Media can be supplemented with Split Image (Dates and Barlow, 1990) and Mass Media in America (Pember, 1992). These works better highlight the participation of African-Americans and other historically under represented groups in mass media industries. Other sources regarding the role of African-Americans are found in an extensive bibliography entitled "Blacks in the Media: Communications Research Since 1978" (Williams, 1990), published by the Howard University Center for Communications Research.

The Persuasion course describes persuasion theory and contemporary applications of persuasion theory. One of these applications involves persuasion in public speaking. Contemporary public speakers can be used for case study analysis in the course. This is an excellent opportunity to naturally include African-Americans (i.e. speeches by Martin Luther King Jr., and the Jesse Jackson address at the 1988 Democratic National Convention).

The Communication in the Organization course emphasizes communication in interpersonal, group, and organizational settings. It is suggested that one simple guideline for text selection in such a course is to analyze possible textbooks for favorable inclusion of traditionally under-represented racial and cultural groups in case studies, examples, photographs and overall content. This guideline would obviously be beneficial when considering textbooks for other courses in the communication arts curriculum as well.

The Unity in Diversity course is a new course that was developed under the auspices of the aforementioned Lilly Grant. This course is team taught by Judith Abala (a black female) and Jim Schnell (a white male). This course, developed by Abala and Schnell, is an introductory course that explores the implications of belonging to a culturally pluralistic society with all of its richness, complexities, challenges and responsibilities. The course seeks to enhance the ability of a diverse student body to interact with culturally diverse individuals who comprise American society.

There is no textbook for the course. Instead, a readings booklet (comprised of many different articles from a variety of sources) has been compiled. Jan Dates has reviewed this readings booklet, and other course materials, and offered feedback regarding how Abala and Schnell can effectively meet course objectives.

Unity in Diversity is an experimental course at the time of this writing. It has the potential for being added to the core requirement courses required for all students. The Unity in Diversity exit survey is included as Attachment #1 to this article.

Each mentor-mentee relationship is going to be unique. Thus, it is difficult to dictate specific outcomes that should be achieved in such a relationship. However, the authors have found collaboration of communication arts faculty members from a historically Black institution and a historically white institution to yield results that are tangible and less-tangible. The tangible results regarding curricular development have been noted. Less tangible results have been realized via the experience of consistent interaction with a colleague from another institution and being able to visit each others' campuses. This type of exposure helps to establish a foundation for future curricular development.

Consistent interaction between the authors occurs via the postal service, telephone (conversation and voice mailbox), and fax machines. Ideas and feedback have been

easily transmitted through these channels. Obviously the face-to-face interaction has been the most meaningful form of communication.

The authors visit each others campuses as part of the Lilly Grant program. Dates visits to Ohio Dominican enhance her understanding of the academic and social climate that exists. Schnell's visits to Howard University provide him with an enriched learning opportunity regarding African-American perspectives and the African-American experience in America. His visits to Howard include sitting in on classes, taught by Dates and others, and time to study in the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. The Moorland-Spingarn Center is one of the largest collections of African and African-American literature in the world. The Center has been especially beneficial in helping Schnell obtain a context for understanding African-American academic contributions to higher education.

Future curricular development can promote an increased inclusion of other perspectives such as Asian, Latino, Arab, and Native-American perspectives.

Implementation of this model with other communication arts programs is a logistically sound proposition. There will obviously be unique circumstances in any faculty collaboration but the basic framework offered by the authors is a model that can be used as a guide for use by other institutions.

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ATTACHMENT #1

UNITY IN DIVERSITY EXIT SURVEY no name is needed

Why did you sign up for this course?

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:
SA - Strongly Agree
A - Agree
N - Neutral
D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree

The course has addressed my interest areas that inspired me to take the course.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The course has helped me develop a better understanding of the culturally pluralistic society that we live in.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The course has enhanced my awareness of the dynamics that exist when I interact with culturally different individuals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The course should be required for all ODC students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
The course could be effectively taught as a two hour course (instead of a four hour course).	SA	A	N	D	SD

What are the greatest strengths of the course?

Can you suggest any areas needing improvement?